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ABSTRACT

The nature of teachers' control in classrooms is explored in order: to understand the tension created when noneducators superimpose their rules on the regime of teachers at work and to learn something of a general nature about the antagonism between regulators and those they regulate. Teachers' regulatory powers are based on coercion, exchange, or authority. Coercion heightens antagonism to a regulatory regime in the classroom, whereas exchange (the "purchase" of student compliance) tends to corrupt the regime. The only recourse left is the development of authority--a moralized means of control that transforms teachers' might into right and students' obedience into duty. When outside sources, such as the courts, have an effect on school authority, the moral basis of local classroom authority may be threatened. Outside officials must develop the prudence and eloquence to preserve traditional organizational purposes while imposing new demands. Regulation is political in the sense that it depends on the arts of human control. If regulators, failing to get a workable agreement, use force, they may be turning away from the possibility of ever again cultivating a working agreement. (Author/MLF)

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Project Report No. 83-A10

TEACHERS' REGULATION OF THE CLASSROOM

William K. Muir, Jr.

May 1983

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Abstract

Teachers are subjected to outside commands because in their classrooms they command others; teachers are authorized to control the lives of their students. This essay explores the nature of the teacher's control in the classroom. An appreciation of the nature of power in the schoolhouse will illuminate the tension created when non-educators superimpose their rules on the regime of teachers at work. In addition, by analyzing the reaction of pupils to the regime of their teachers, we may come to understand the reaction of teachers to the regime of their state. Furthermore, the successes and failures of teachers with their pupils may reveal something about the means by which public officials may productively regulate teachers.

Discussions of the regulation of schooling usually focus on the behavior of educators under the commands of non-educators and address the issue, under what circumstances do teachers (and their professional supervisors) submit to the regulation of outsiders like courts, agencies, and legislatures, and when do they not?

Teachers are subjected to outside commands because in their classrooms they command others. At least at the elementary- and secondary-school levels, teachers are authorized to control in detail the lives of their students.

In this essay, I want to explore the nature of the teacher's control in the classroom. It will be profitable to do so for two reasons. First, an appreciation of the nature of power in the schoolhouse will help the reader to understand the tension created when non-educators superimpose their rules on the regime of teachers at work. Regulations conceived in statehouses and courthouses are intended to affect what goes on in the classroom, but they presuppose teachers' continued control there. If external regulations assume the maintenance of classroom order, yet upset the authority of teachers on which order depends, then outside interference may lead to unhappy and unintended results.

Second, there is a theoretical reason for exploring the regime of teachers. In the microcosm of the schoolroom, we may learn something of a general nature about the antagonism between regulators and those they regulate. Specifically, by analyzing the reaction of pupils to the regime of their teachers, we may come to understand the reaction of teachers to the regime of their state. Furthermore, the successes and failures of teachers with their pupils may reveal something about the means by which public officials may productively regulate teachers.

II

If by regulation we mean the prohibition of activity except when officials expressly permit it, then the most heavily regulated party in the educational system is the student. If regulatory intrusiveness is measured by the specificity with which officials may define the ways in which an activity must be carried out by the subjects of the regulation, then among the most intrusive regulators in the free world is the schoolteacher.

The keystone of the public school system is the compulsory attendance law, which places every American youth under the thumb of schoolteachers seven hours a day, five days per week, thirty-five weeks per year, eleven years a lifetime—13,000 hours of pervasive regulation. Schoolteachers have the authority to diminish the free choices of students radically. They frustrate and intermeddle in the immediate interests of the children. They regulate where pupils may sit, with whom they may converse, what topics they may discuss, what they may do, and how they may do it.

While, as a general matter, youth are deprived of many adult freedoms, during school hours a teacher is authorized to subject youngsters to regulation of the minutest details. The degree of regulatory control formally invested in schoolteachers over student life approaches total power. Unless students comply, unless they show up at a particular school, attend a particular class, behave in particular ways, complete particular tasks, and reach a particular level of skill at doing them, then teachers may reduce their grades, humiliate them, extend their school day, withhold their diplomas, and, in the last resort, initiate criminal proceedings against them and their parents for attempting to flee the schoolhouse. Even though students are no longer subject to whippings by their teachers, for practical purposes the formal powers of punishment enjoyed by teachers are dire. Students live under the threats of teachers, and teachers are authorized to bring those threats to bear on any wayward defiance of their regime.

Part of the justification for extending such regulatory power to schoolteachers is that schools are expected to shape the character of students.[1] Civilized society expects educational institutions to help transform each young pupil, willy-nilly, into an adult capable of self-government in an active and free society. Therefore, it authorizes teachers to drill students in "good" behavior. The students often resist such efforts at character-shaping: learning the particular skills and moral orientations of adulthood is arduous, uncomfortable, and, for some, pointless. To preempt disruptive resistance, teachers are given still more regulatory power. They can, for example, dictate when children may go to the bathroom, hang up their coats, or sharpen their pencils.

Despite these expansive regulatory powers, however, in day-to-day reality teachers often feel out of control. Even if they can prevent students from acting disruptively, they are at a loss to elicit the personal improvement which justifies the severe classroom regime in the first place. The shortcoming in the teachers' regulatory power is that it depends upon coercion. At least in the last resort, if a teacher lacks sufficient resourcefulness or authority to enlist students' willingness to submit, a teacher must induce order by coercion, and coercion is a highly problematic form of control. Let me momentarily digress on the general nature of coercion and then return to the practice of coercion in the classroom.

III

Coercion—the use of power and force as a means—depends on intimidation. As a consequence, parties on a coercive relationship to one another are almost invariably antagonistic. At least the victimized party generally feels the urge to terminate or avenge matters. Why coercion provokes individuals to avenge their grievances requires some explanation.[2]

Coercion involves the gaining of a ransom by threatening harm to a hostage. The victimizer commits himself to injure something of value to the victim (the hostage) unless the latter turns over something else of lesser value (the ransom). "Your money or your life," whether announced by the mugger or the tax collector, is the classic utterance in the coercive relationship. From the victim's viewpoint, it makes little difference if the victimizer is a criminal or an official. The means are the same. Extortionists and regulators alike exercise control by presenting dilemmas: their victims must either accept the loss of a substantial degree of freedom or lose all their freedom.

Coercion is likely to become a mutually antagonistic relationship. Victims tend to want to retaliate as soon as they have the chance to do so. Victimizers, therefore, must always be preoccupied with the task of self-defense. Those who have recourse to coercion are caught up in a vicious circle, threatening and at the same time suffering counterthreats.

The ironic feature of coercion is that some persons, by virtue of having nothing to lose, are virtually "threat-proof." Lacking possessions, they neither expose hostages nor have ransoms of much value. For example, childless couples are invulnerable to kidnapers, because they have no kids to lose; impoverished couples are likewise rarely bothered, because they have no ransoms to pay. Moreover, the dispossessed are ideal practitioners of coercion on others, because their victims have nothing to retaliate against. Watch a jalopy and a Cadillac vie for priority at an intersection, and usually the paradox of dispossession will be played out. The driver of the jalopy almost always wins the deference of the possessor of the Cadillac, because jalopy drivers have much less to lose from a collision.

There are exceptions, even to the intersection case. There are Cadillac owners who are so heavily self-insured that they can afford to be indifferent to the threat of damage. If they can communicate their financial indifference in a convincing way, the jalopy driver may see that his threat to injure is not much of a threat at all. Generally speaking, in coercion, a detached person, one who is indifferent about the destruction of his possessions, is in as strong a coercive position as one who has no possessions. For that reason, the king who disdains his daughter is not likely to be compelled to deplete his treasury to recover the princess from her kidnaper. A dramatized indifference is frequently a useful defense against coercive aggressors.

Coercion is basically psychological. People who make threats do not want to execute them. Practitioners of coercion seek a ransom, and threatening hostages is a means of securing it. Carring out threats means failure, at least in the short run. One ends up with neither the ransom nor the hostage. The union leader does not want to call his followers off the job and require them to pick up their pickets. For one thing, the rank-and-file members stop being paid, and that hurts. For another, the employer may be forced out of business; the workers then lose their jobs--and their hostage. The union leaders want the employer to take the possibility of a strike seriously and capitulate in anticipation of the workers' walkout. Thus, whether a strike threat will succeed hinges on whether the employer credits the workers' sincerity. It is vital that he believe that the workers really mean that they are threatening--that they will gladly destroy their paymaster unless they get additional pay. To make that threat convincing, a union leader's appearance of vindictiveness may convince the employers that the workers are mean and intend to be so. In coercion, "face," a reputation for ill will and brutishness, plays a critical

part. Whether one is a union leader, parent, or lawyer, the nastier the reputation of one who resorts to coercion, the less nasty one may have to be. The more savage the threatener appears to be, the less likely the victim is going to call his bluff. If one's threats are given credence and the victim capitulates, then there is no need to behave savagely toward the hostage of the victim.

One final observation: even in the face of the direst threat, there is a defense. If the intended victim cannot comprehend the threat and the threatener knows it, the latter will give up and no coercion will occur. It is fruitless to practice a threat over the telephone on a deaf person or one who does not speak the same language. The obvious crazy who does not see the peril implicit in another's threat may have successfully defended against it if the threatener detects the incomprehension. Sometimes fools can safely tread where angels ought not to go.

To sum up, then, coercion is a form of control in which a favorable balance of power is enjoyed by the dispossessed, the detached, the remorseless, and the irrational. They are invulnerable, while those who are productive, caring, kind, or reasonable are exposed and susceptible.

The problematic aspect of coercion is that it turns civilized values upside down and reverses the civilized pattern of incentives. Where coercion rules, there are no rewards for developing one's talents, empathy, trust and intelligence. In coercion, personal assets are transformed into liabilities. The goods one produces attract thieves; the things one cares about expose more hostages; forgiveness implies weakness; and being alert to dangers amplifies the threats of others. In coercion, motives run in a contrary direction. In short, as a potential target of threats, a person is moved to dwarf his self, his hopes, and his cache of things cared about; and as a potential practitioner of threats, he is motivated to cultivate his brutish side.

IV

What happens when coercion is exercised in the classroom? In a purely coercive confrontation between teacher and student, no one should doubt the outcome. Despite having all the formal instruments of coercion, the typical teacher is going to lose control. The students, the subjects of regulation, are not going to submit. For one thing, they expose virtually no hostages; the teacher offers plenty. Compared to teachers, youths are more dispossessed, less empathetic, and more likely to be senseless about the "long-run" consequences of their actions. Teachers, on the other hand, have careers to lose, hopes to be dashed, prior sacrifices to be made vain, and the perspective to see what is at stake. In contrast to them, pupils are the perfect dwarfed target--disposessed, indifferent, and unseeing.

For a second thing, students lack the remorse which hobbles teachers as practitioners of coercion. The capacity of students--under certain circumstances, at least--to be defiant, insolent, inattentive, and insubordinate is unlimited. Recall an incident in Willard Waller's classic, The Sociology of Teaching. The incident Waller describes occurred in the 1920s, when the tools of school discipline still included corporal punishment, and courts had not yet prescribed limits to teachers' disciplinary discretion. The story illustrates the potential savagery of even the best-mannered children. Waller quotes a teacher's account of the last day of a five-day ordeal in study hall supervision:

> The fifth and last day of my torture came. It was pandemonium. That day from the first bell on, I was perfectly helpless, and saw nothing to do but stand up and take my punishment. The inkwells were flying faster than ever. I tried to make a plea, but it was unheard. I couldn't make my voice carry above the din. I smiled grimly and settled down to hold on for the forty-five minutes. There were signs that the more timid boys were genuinely

> concerned about the danger they ran. One boy was hit and had to go out of the room with a slight cut over his eye. An inkwell came very close to my head. Midway in the hour a boy got up, looked at me indignantly, and cried out, "I'm not going to stay in here any longer." Then he fled from the room. A dozen others rose and started to follow him. I stood in front of the door as if to bar their exit. Then the whole assembly room arose, and rushed angrily out of the room, whooping and stamping their feet. I did not try to stop them. I was glad it was over.[3]

Why was the teacher "perfectly helpless"? While the teacher had the formal authority to pacify, he was constrained by scruples from applying it savagely. On the other hand, the things he cared about were sitting targets for the coercive practices of the students: his identification with the "more timid" and vulnerable boys, his hopes for an orderly and productive study period, and his job (which could be made intolerable by supervisors who wanted him to keep things quiet and above scandal, no matter what the means).

Conversely, some of the students were indifferent, at least on that day, to any legitimate sanctions available to the teacher: a reduction in grades, reports to the principal, and expulsion.

In schools the balance of power will be tilted even more adversely against the teacher in hopeless classrooms. In coercive confrontations with lower-tracked students (particularly those who are handicapped by societal prejudices and feel they will fail no matter what their efforts to get a good job and succeed at it), a teacher virtually has nothing to withhold by way of punishment. If a teacher threatens students, they will call the bluff, and then the teacher will have to escalate the stakes to a level of savagery which the law prohibits.

If a teacher has the formal responsibility to regulate but has neither the capacity nor the will to prevail in a coercive confrontation, he or she has few choices. One thing which might be done, as just noted, is to decide to become

unacceptably punitive, even violent. By setting aside all scruples regarding brutal insults, biting sarcasm, and physical browbeating, classroom instructors may gain control. They will find themselves, however, slipping into cynicism. Cynicism supports insupportable punishments by dehumanizing the students. By placing blame on students and holding them all hopeless, harsh teachers seek to escape the guilt they feel about their vehemence.

A second option for a teacher is to abdicate. A Boston schoolteacher, interviewed by her colleague Sara Freedman, describes an instructor who has just adjusted her expectations downward to the point where she has become perpetually indifferent to her professional responsibilities:

> There's one teacher in our school who should not be teaching. She doesn't get up from her desk and move around the class, really, and she does a lot of absent-minded things, and she really doesn't do anything creative with the kids. She's had it. Parents will say to me, "My child had Miss H. last year", as if I will understand.[4]

A third response is to quit, and nearly every teacher has thought seriously about this option. For example, another Boston schoolteacher interviewed by Freedman uttered this <u>crie de coeur</u>:

> I was just thinking of one other thing that I didn't like about having a bunch of tough kids in my class and what it did to me. And that is, I felt I yelled a lot. I didn't yell a lot, but I yelled. I didn't like that, and I also physically managed those kids, by the arm, take them over, and I can remember huffing and puffing after doing that. And thinking, "What the hell am I doing? Isn't there another way?"[5]

Coercion is not always doomed to such bleak outcomes as escalation, irresponsibility, or resignation. Sometimes pure intimidation may succeed in gaining passive submission to the regulatory order, but what will be lost is student morale: the pupils' willingness to do more than passively suffer their defeats.

Teachers, therefore, who want to gain productive compliance with the classroom regime must rely on means other than coercion. But the teachers' arsenal, like that of other regulators, is limited to two alternatives: exchange and authority.

V

The first means of control is exchange. Teachers may attempt to purchase submission to their regulatory claims. The question is, what price must they pay to get student compliance? By and large, teachers have little of value to offer as their end of the bargain. In part, unless the students' immediate wants are academic (the one need which teachers are professionally trained to satisfy), teachers may not be competitive with suppliers of the things students really want. Friendship, prestige, physical security, solace, money, self-respect--these are the resources which students desire, and anyone who can supply their wants more cheaply and abundantly will compete with the teacher and subvert the educational enterprise.[6] Alternatively, if a teacher has personal and nonacademic resources which the students want (such as the ability and time to teach the skills of dress-making or flyball-catching), those resources must be dispensed prudently and selectively. Teahcers who use their personal resources to buy compliance from a class face a dilemma. One horn of that dilemma is universalism: assisting one student heightens the expectations of classmates, who believe they are entitled to equal assistance. The other horn is depletion: if every good deed is universalized, the teacher will invariably exhaust her time and energy, especially since non-academic obligations are in addition to academic duties. Nonacademic benefits tend to take time. Being a Boy Scout leader, showing up at weekend socials, counseling

individuals and coaching teams lay heavy claims to hours outside of the classroom job. They are rarely nickle-and-dime benefits; hence, they deplete the providers of them.

The other service which a teacher may trade for student compliance is relaxation of the regulatory regime in the classroom. Leniency--ignoring infractions, reducing standards, forgiving sins--is not necessarily a bad thing in classrooms, but it has its problems. First, it often leads to inequity: the worst-behaved students get the greatest forgiveness, while their victims and peers, who have done nothing to be forgiven, receive nothing for their good behavior. Second, leniency may corrupt the regime in the classroom: the rules and standards may suffer ridicule and lose their connection to moral obligation. Third, leniency is subject to diminishing returns, rising expectations, and blackmail: a teacher may have to surrender increasingly and pay an even larger premium to keep matters quiet and out of public earshot.

I do not want to make exchange appear as an irrelevant basis for regulatory control. It is not. As the perceptive sociologist, Mary Metz points out, a teacher "may build up obligations of exchange through many kinds of indirect, even self-conscious interchange . . . Such obligations may even be enforced by (students) who are aware of, or share in, favors done."[7] But the limits of exchange are real, the provision of legitimate benefits exhausting, and the long-run dangers of leniency as an exchangeable resource very great.

VI

If coercion heightens antagonism to a regulatory regime in the classroom and exchange tends to corrupt it, only one recourse is left. Regulation must be moralized: to adapt Rousseau's memorable phrase, teachers must transform their might into right, and obedience into duty.[8] I shall give the name authority to such moralized means of control.

A model of an authoritative relationship consists of a program or script (sometimes loosely called a subculture) which consists of a variety of roles.[9] Each role comprises a generally understood set of rights and duties, and defines what actions are permitted, obligatory, and forbidden to an occupant of that role. So long as one wants to work within the particular community governed by an authoritative script, one adopts a role, thereby linking oneself up with the other role-players or actors.

Why do individuals enter into authoritatively defined roles and willingly accept external dominion over their actions? One answer is that roles contain more than definitions of right and wrong. They contain valuable causal and philosophical theories as well.

On the one hand, roles provide explanations and illuminate matters otherwise shrouded in doubt. In that sense, they have a hunch content, so to speak. A script containing many roles coordinates the actions of many actors and enables some predictions about the future. An individual can come to depend on persons and actions subject to their common script. Moreover, each role-player can make things happen within the script, because he learns the cues which evoke others to respond dutifully.

If, in fact, the script works, if reality is orderly and confirms the actors' predictions and desires--harm is fended off and benefits are secured--then allegiance to the script is gradually strengthened. Each role becomes more heartfelt, and the various players channel their energies with greater gusto into their parts. We say that their characters come to be shaped to their roles. Their behavior becomes moralized in two senses: individual conscience is engaged (guilt), and

fellow actors encourage one another to conform to the dictates of their roles (shame). Conversely, if things do not happen as predicted and confusion results from adhering to a script, belief in it is undermined. Allegiance to the moral community weakens; ambiguity and equivocation erode the certainty with which individuals had played their parts. Faith in the enterprise is shaken, and demoralization sets in.

Roles also have a philosophical content. They are purposeful, investing work with meaning and immortality and inviting personal commitment. The story goes that three men were asked what they were doing. The first said, "I am laying stones." The second answered, "I am building a wall." And, the third replied, "I am building a cathedral." Roles permit the individual to connect up one's small contributions to the greater enterprise and take credit for it.

Thus, the reasons why individuals accept authority willingly is that it relieves technical and existential uncertainty. Authority relationships permit individuals who don roles to get on with matters without paralyzing self-doubt. In David Kirp's splendid phrase, authority enables us to "suspend disbelief" and to leave what is unknown or unknowable to others, to those "in authority."[10] The cost of this dispensation from doubt is to accept the regulation written into the roles constituting the social script.

Much more needs to be said about this classic notion of authority. For one thing, each individual plays a part in many scripts, and the various roles of any one individual may conflict and be internally contradictory. Secondly, one function of leadership is to rewrite the scripts of life from time-to-time--sometimes marginally, sometimes radically--and the changes can often have unsettling consequences. And thirdly, within an accepted role the individual actor is required

to classify particular situations so as to bring them within the more abstract notions of right and wrong defined by the role. All of these phenomena--role-conflict, role-redefinition, and situational classification--affect the stability and reliability of authoritative regimes.

Nonetheless, authority does stabilize our situations. We let "authorities" govern our lives and enlighten our self-interest to such an extent that more often than not we want to do what those in authority expect of us, despite the lack of any immediate reward or sanction.

Sensitive observers of public schools have emphasized the vital importance of the teacher's authority in the classroom. The sociologist, Mary Metz, in her insightful research on two junior high schools during the turbulent 1960s, was struck by the fact that the bulk of the teachers and students played their parts in the "service of a moral order to which both (teachers and students alike) owe(d) allegiance."[11] That is, despite the breakdown of confidence at large, the meagerness of teachers' resources, the limits of their punitive powers, and the universal questioning of contemporary values, "in fact most classes . . . were conducted with a civility and some semblance of concentration."[12]

While teachers and students had their conflicts, their struggles were fought in principled terms, within the notions of right and wrong morally legislated into their roles as teachers and students.

Here we must wonder why students were willing to "suspend disbelief," why they did not radically defy the duties of studenthood. This is a puzzling question, especially since, as the organizational theorist Charles Bidwell points out, school systems are distinguishable from the typical moral orders in society. Most organizations are voluntary. The phone company or a political party distribute roles on

the basis of achievement to persons who want to enter them. In contrast, schools are organizations where only the teachers have voluntarily hunted out their roles, while students have been assigned theirs, with little regard to their immediate interests. Students are involuntarily captives of their roles.[13]

One reason why students accept the role assigned to them is that they are very young when they enter school and relatively ignorant of alternative definitions of what they might be doing. It is easy to get first-graders to accept their part because they do not know they have a choice. (In the "old days," what is recalled is students' enduring ignorance of competing notions of their place.)

Yet, there was something other than ignorance inclining students to accept the classroom authority in the schools studied by Metz. There was, even in the hearts of the most skeptical adolescents, a yearning for assurance in the face of their own technical and existential uncertainty. By accepting the particular responsibilities of the student role, they evaded the crushing burden of adult responsibility for the larger society, about which they knew too little and which they were not ready to accept or renounce. In one of many insightful passages, Metz discusses how accepting the role of pupil relieved students, even the worst treated ones, of having to make a "premature" decision about their later lives.

> At the same time that the black children in the lower tracks might find the school's curriculum both irrelevant and useless to them, they recognized perfectly clearly that the school is the agent of the larger society and must represent its values. If what the school teaches is irrelevant to their lives, then their lives are irrelevant to the larger society. It is, therefore, usual for such children not simply to reject the curriculum but to have a highly ambivalent attitude toward it. It is in this context that one can understand the importance in these students' eyes of a teacher's genuine efforts to teach. Teachers who do not continue to try despite the students' resistance are telling them they cannot learn what the society calls important. They are offering an insult. One teacher who consistently

> yelled at children and occasionally hit at them was universally chosen by her students as their least-liked teacher. But the reason given was less often her angry attacks than her disinclination to explain the work or to help children who were having difficulty with it.[14]

The adolescents in Metz's study were unwilling to discard all chance of attaining the meaning which the larger society could offer their later lives, and they resented as "an insult" a teacher who denied them the right to play the student role, with its privilege to delay existential choices.

VII

Authority does not mean perfect uniformity. Teachers and students are different; they instruct and learn differently and hold to a broad variety of notions about their schools. Moreover, teachers in America may play their pedagogical role in many acceptable ways, such as by resembling parents, bureaucrats, scholars, therapists, or facilitators. Authority does not deny a degree of individuality to its subjects.

While allowing for some variety, however, authority approaches its limits when fundamental questions are raised and left unanswered. "In the beginning was the Word," counsels St. John. The beginning--and essence--of authority is the "word," the vital tradition conceded by all those who play their roles in the social script. In individual schools, authority depends on the existence among the faculty and students of a single broad consensus on educational philosophy. The consensus deals with "core" questions of purpose, such as the relationship of individual achievement to collective order, the commitment to excellence or equality, the relative importance of knowledge and creativity, the kind of teaching style preferred, and whether the goal is to teach the child or the subject. Choices always have to be made among alternative purposes. Authority is strengthened over time.

The longer the same priorities are maintained, the deeper grow the habits and attitudes which support a particular tradition. Teachers who agree with the traditional choices are galvanized into activity; those who do not agree fall back quiescent. Students and outsiders are encouraged or discouraged to speak up by the apparent agreement among those "in authority."

Any apparent consensus is strengthened when there is no strong authoritative and competing view. When the consensus is broken, however, when officials speak at odds, then the definition of what is happening in the schools--the "word"--becomes incomprehensible. The center of authority no longer holds; things fall apart; and confusion reigns.

David Kirp, a lawyer and educator, provides an illustration of how subversive a judicial opinion may be of classroom authority relationships. In an article entitled "Proceduralism and Bureaucracy: Due Process in the School Setting," he analyzes the implications of Goss v. Lopez,[15] in which the United States Supreme Court ruled on the minimal due process requirements for student discipline and short-term suspensions from school. Kirp writes:

> The court. . . voices its understanding of the proper relationship between the student and his school. "(I)t would be a strange disciplinary system in an educational institution," writes Justice White, "if no communication was sought by the disciplinarian with the student in an effort to inform him of his dereliction and to let him tell his side of the story in order to make sure that an injustice is not done." That observation presumes a particular kind of relationship between adults and children in school. It implies the desirability of colloquy and exchange of information, rather than one-way communication of policies. It indicates that there may be valid perceptions of injustice to be gleaned from students. Most importantly, it treats the educational value of interchange between students and disciplinarians as of greater moment than allegiance to hierarchy.

In short, the Goss majority elevates to constitutional status a particular view of how public school officials should relate to their students.[16] The point

Kirp makes is that two authoritative sources--the local school administration and the external authority of the Supreme Court--may speak contradictory "words," with one educational philosophy emphasizing traditional ideas of "hierarchy" and the other urging a modern notion of mutuality between teachers and students. Moreover, Kirp points out that the Court's opinion in Goss v. Lopez makes no effort to reconcile the competing ideas of worthiness: the clash between tradition and modernity is left unresolved.

Outside official sources, such as the courts, have an effect on school authority because they vindicate groups previously quiescent; that is, persons who share the views of the outside officials are made self-conscious and are encouraged into activity.[17] They may be lawyers, slightly unhappy parents, or even members of the school board. Once encouraged by the support of someone in authority, they are likely to become assertive carriers of these nontraditional views in the locality in which they live. At the same time, outside officials may stagger those who have been "in authority." The criticism, explicit or implicit in their discordant regulations, may undermine confidence among the traditionalists.

When that happens, the moral basis of local classroom authority may be threatened. With each official notion that implies conflicting values and prescribes mutually contradictory roles for students and teachers to play, the older social script no longer provides the sanctuary in which disbelief can be suspended. Even so well-intentioned an external regulation as one concerning the teaching of limited-English-speaking children may have unsettling effects. Students who were once certain they wanted to make the honor roll find themselves thinking that the regulation may imply they are gullible or their efforts unworthy. When the teacher of English is derogated by some governmental agency for being inadequately

solicitous of non-English-speaking populations, she is shaken in her faith that getting students to understand Shakespeare is worth the effort. When authorities collide, suddenly no one is as willing to "suspend disbelief" as formerly. Everything of importance is at issue.

All the fundamental questioning which results may be useful, even necessary, but it undermines the regime of authority on which student submission has depended. Even though students once derived confidence from a moral order which let them pursue adolescent goals, why should they continue to submit when that order begins to speak equivocally and destroys self-confidence? When students lose their faith, however, when they begin to doubt the word of their teachers, order in the classroom becomes hard to achieve. Effortlessness is lost. As Metz stresses: "There are enormous savings in time and in phychic and intellectual energy if a class will take the word of adults that some of these subjects which are not inherently appealing will in fact be of use to them."[18] When "the word of adults" is thrown into doubt, the teacher must reach down for personal resources, or, lacking them, resort to coercion. The possibility of increased coercion in the classroom points to an important lesson.

The lesson is this: When external regulators are convinced that major changes must be made in school systems--and sometimes they must, as many essays in this volume make clear--the moral fabric of schools is bound to be fiercely tested and sometimes badly rent. It is crucial that those who seek to regulate schools from the outside craft their regulations with respect for those internal traditions. It may sound timid to suggest that change for change's sake is unwise and that elephants are best eaten in small bites, but reducing the necessity to use coercion

in the classroom (and reducing the cynicism which develops in the hearts of those who exercise it) is worth it.

VIII

All this discussion tends to overstate the case. In fact, authoritative regimes, including classrooms and school systems, are more resilient than analysis of them makes appear possible. Ignored and even buffeted, authority still maintains some governance over our behavior without our knowing it--which is, of course, the secret of its success. It penetrates our hearts and minds, and we willingly reject competing allegiances.

Yet, we have learned in the past several decades, when institutions like schools and universities were under attack and partially collapsed as a result, that authority may be mortal. Institutions of moral "attachment,"[19] as Metz calls complex organizations of every stripe, fell apart into rampant and uncommitted individualism. To prevent further chaos, the frightened and the strong turned to force, hoping to recover the peace which once seemed a part of the natural order of things.

I think it fair to assert that external regulation played its part in demoralizing the school organizations it impinged upon. Some outside officials, with purposes quite extraneous to the traditional goals of those they regulated, negligently wreaked disastrous consequences. I use the word negligently advisedly, because they did not want to wreck the enterprises over which they shared governance. Judges who commanded school systems to change did not try to abdicate their responsibility for preventing educational collapse. If judges--or any officials--fell short of their good intentions, it was not for lack of them.

To succeed in the purpose of revitalizing the organizations they deign to regulate, however, outside officials must develop skills to nurture as well as nudge the authority on which organizations depend. One crucial skill is what Chester Barnard called the capacity for moral creativeness.[20] By that phrase, Bernard meant the prudence and eloquence to preserve traditional organizational purposes while imposing new demands. Successful reconciliation of what at first appear to be the cross-purposes of tradition and modernity requires unflagging effort to articulate and dramatize organizational continuity throughout the uncertain days of adjustment to change. Success depends on a sympathetic understanding of the habits and attitudes of the regulated industry. If official power lacks moral creativity, if it tampers recklessly with the careers and lives of those who make up the collective enterprise, if it is heedless of the miraculous way individuals coordinate themselves in a single purpose, if, in short, officials are morally blind to the subtlety of authority, then they will be abusive and corrupting. Worse, official power will soon find itself turning to increased use of coercion and justifying recourse to it with destructive hatred of the very enterprise it was supposed to serve.

It takes courage to play the regulator's part well. Regulators who observe their moral responsibilities sensitively will be accused of being taken in by the enterprises they are appointed to regulate. In fact, co-optation may result. By knowing the industry within their jurisdiction so well, by feeling so fully the responsibility for keeping operations going, regulators may not fulfill their public purpose to alter things. To avoid the two extremes--of destructiveness and innocuousness--regulators have to play their equivocal roles with a skillful integrity of considerable magnitude. There is no help for it. Regulation,

whether by court, agency, or legislature, is not a job for unprepared or innocent pilgrims. If regulators do not understand the authoritative regimes with which they tamper, they will soon reap the wind.

That should surprise no one. For regulation is political in the sense that it depends on the arts of human control. Officials must win over by persuasion those of us who play their parts in the social script. If they fail to get a workable agreement, however, force lies at their disposal, a last resort to which events and supplicants may compel them. But, in using force, they may be turning away from the possibility of ever again cultivating a working agreement.

Regulators would do well to recall Max Weber's powerful warning in "Politics as a Vocation":

> He who lets himself in for politics, for power and force as a means, contracts with diabolical powers and for his action it is not true that good can follow only from good and evil only from evil, but that often the opposite is true. Anyone who fails to see this is, indeed, a political infant.[21]

Regulators who take responsibility unaware of the subtlety of authority and the need to obtain agreement to it may find themselves fulfilling their contract with the devil. If evil then flows despite their good intentions, history may rightly denounce them as political infants. That would be a sad epitaph for those who began with such humane purposes.

NOTES

1. David L. Kirp, "Proceduralism and Bureaucracy: Due Process in the School Setting," Stanford Law Review, 28 (May 1976) 841; and Charles E. Bidwell, "The School as a Formal Organization," in James G. March, ed., Handbook of Organizations (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965), pp. 997-1022.

2. William Ker Muir, Jr., Police: Streetcorner Politicians (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), chap. 3.

3. Willard Waller, The Sociology of Teaching (New York: Russell and Russell, 1932), p. 167.

4. Sara Freedman, Jane Jackson, Katherine Boles, and Susan Rotblat-Walker (Boston Women's Teachers Group), "Teaching as an Imperilled Profession" (Unpublished paper, January 1981), p. 7.

5. Ibid., p. 30.

6. Bidwell, "The School," p. 982.

7. Mary Haywood Metz, Classrooms and Corridors: The Crisis of Authority in Desegregated Secondary Schools (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), p. 99.

8. Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract, trans. and ed. Frederick Watkins (Edinburgh and New York: Thomas Nelson, 1953), Vol. 1, chap. 3, p. 6.

9. Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp. 163-174.

10. Kirp, "Proceduralism and Bureaucracy," p. 855.

11. Metz, Classrooms and Corridors, p. 26.

12. Ibid., p. 121.

13. Bidwell, "The School," p. 973.

14. Metz, Classrooms and Corridors, pp. 87-88.

14. Metz, Classrooms and Corridors, pp. 87-88.

15. 419 U.S. 565 (1975).

16. Kirp, "Proceduralism and Bureaucracy," p. 851.

17. William Ker Muir, Jr., Law and Attitude Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 108-110.

18. Metz, Classrooms and Corridors, p. 251.

19. Ibid., p. 16, note 16.

20. Barnard, Functions of the Executive, p. 279.

21. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, ed. and trans. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 123.